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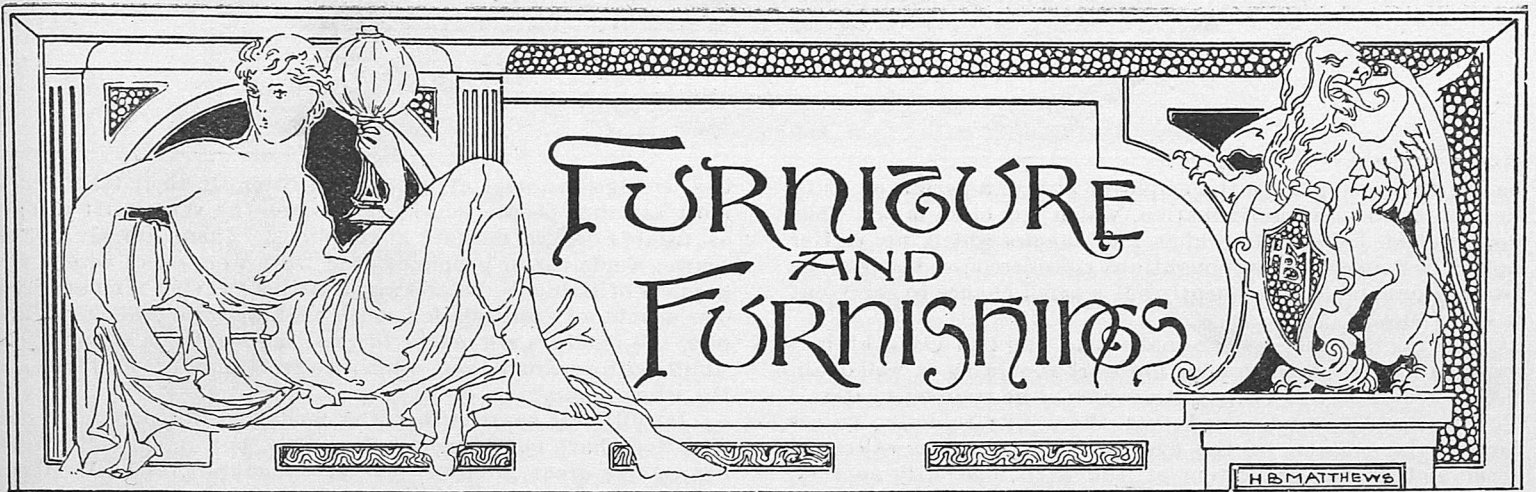
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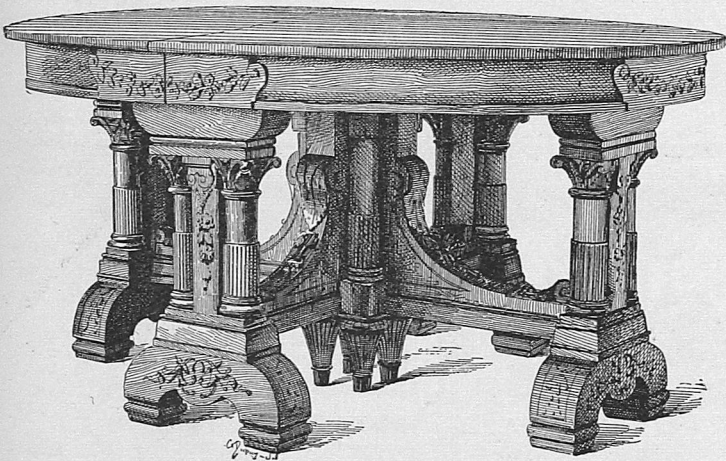
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#### MESSRS. BARDWELL, ANDERSON & CO.

THERE is something heroic in the proportions of the dining table herewith illustrated, which is one of the latest conceptions of Bardwell, Anderson & Co., of Boston, the well-known manufacturers of tables and desks. The ponderous proportions of the table suggest its appropriate use in the dining-room of a club, or private dining-room of large proportions. The architectural features of the design are happily relieved by clever scroll and floral carvings. In the midst of



A DINING-ROOM TABLE. BY BARDWELL, ANDERSON & CO.

the present overwhelming production of French designs, it is refreshing to come across so vigorous a design, that avoids the splashy beauty of much of the furniture referred to. The table, both in design and execution, is admirable, and if such were discovered in the dining hall of an English college or manor house, it would inspire our English contemporaries to rave over its sculptural proportions, and an article would be written upon the majesty and stability of the old English furniture, of which it would be so imposing an illustration.

One gratifying feature in the design is the fact that its decoration is such as will stand the wear and tear of daily use, and as such is an illustration of the right spirit of simplifying ornament which is becoming more and more characteristic of modern art. The table is No. 138 in their catalogue, and is constructed in quartered oak.

#### FURNITURE DESIGNING IN AMERICA.

BY JAMES THOMSON.



OME time ago there appeared in THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER an editorial on furniture designing in America, and deploring that our designers seemed satisfied to copy the styles of other climes and ages, rather than originate something worthy of our own country and the enlightened present.

The London *Furniture Gazette*, in quoting this article, took occasion to express surprise at this state of affairs,

these comments being in the usual patronizing vein which they affect when discussing anything in connection with American furniture.

Now, I propose to offer some reasons for the conditions noted, for it must be admitted that they prevail to some extent. It has been customary to assume that we, as a nation, are very much behind in the industrial arts. But I do not think that we are so much behind as some would have us believe, and I think that the Chicago Exhibition will be in the nature of a surprise to many, and particularly to the English, who, I am certain, will have the conceit knocked out of them, if such a thing is possible. We have made such rapid progress in the art of design as applied to furniture, that it is difficult to believe that we only began to give the subject earnest attention within a few years.

It must be conceded that just at present we are perfectly overwhelmed with French shape in furniture. But it may be asked if the designers are entirely to blame for this state of affairs. There can be seen plenty of well designed work in other than the eccentric French style, but the generality of purchasers pass it by.

In the first place, Americans who visit Europe return with a perfect craze for things "Parisian;" and the furniture man in order to retain the trade here is obliged to cater to this fad. He may be a man of artistic tastes, or the very reverse; whatever he may be he must, to a great extent, be governed by the public demand regardless of his own preferences.



CENTER TABLE IN THE EMPIRE STYLE. DESIGNED BY EDWARD DEWSON.

It is a pleasant fiction that a designer sits in his studio producing the best work of which he is capable, and providing he does his work well, perfectly unhampered by restrictions. There are doubtless some in the finer branches of the business so pleasantly situated, but I may venture to say that the majority are not so fortunate. However this may be, one must make designs that will meet the approval of his employer, which might



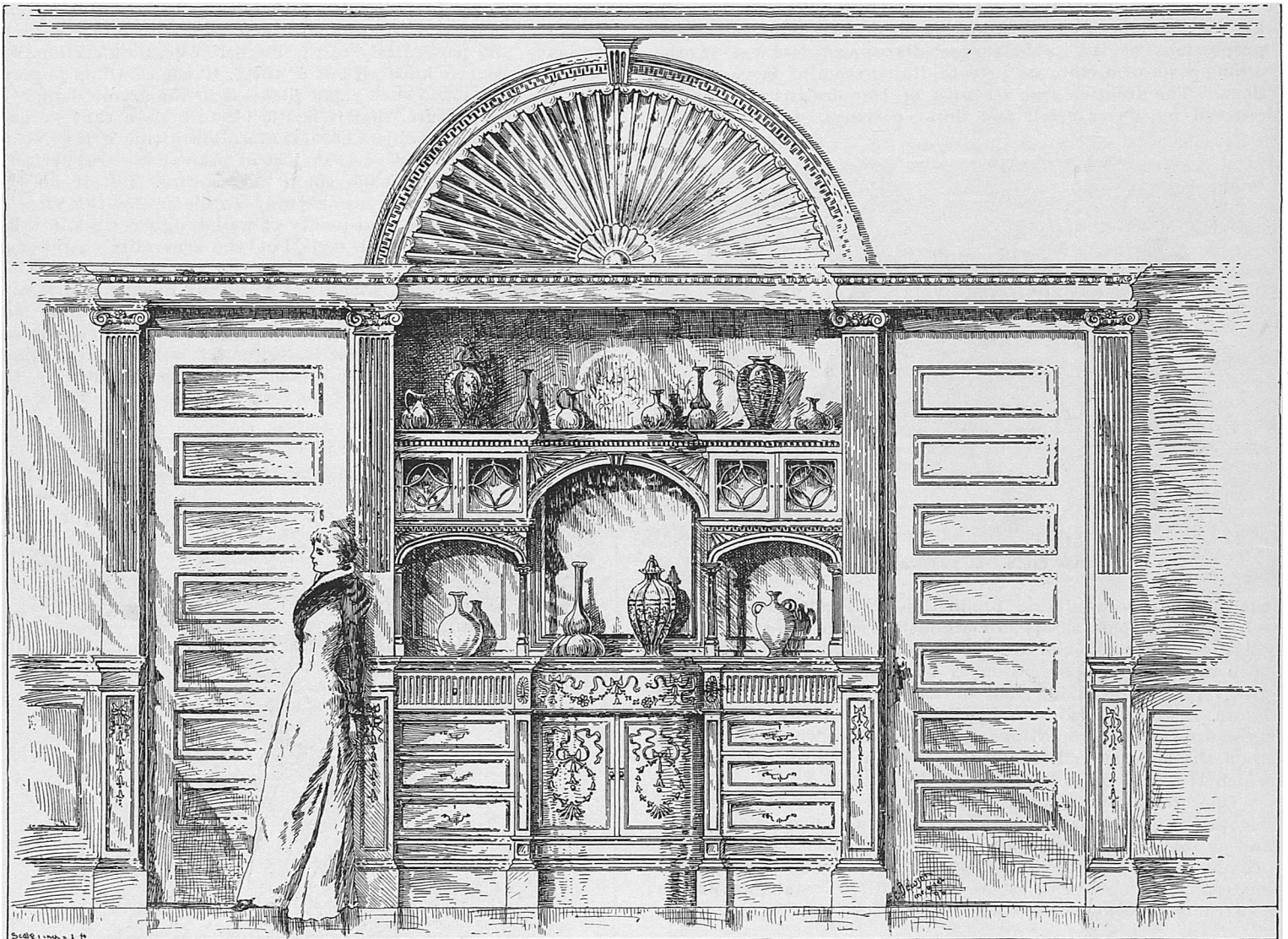
# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

be all well enough were the employer always a person of artistic tastes and nice discrimination, which he often is not. The dear public have their whims and fancies which, no matter how ridiculous, must be thoughtfully considered; so between the two the designer has frequently but a small chance to carry out his own idea.

One might safely assume that a man who had given his best years in fitting himself for his life work should be as well qualified to decide in such matters as a person of no training whatever. For it should be understood that the ability to design *well* is largely the training of the eye to the appreciation of correct form and proper proportion of the parts, one with another. When a designer makes his preliminary drawing he does so to a small scale, say one inch to the foot. The experienced eye can alone decide when the proportions are correct, and unless one is well grounded in the classic orders of architecture and

the average customer of means and listen to their talk, and I must say that people sometimes choose the very worst things, as regards design, that are in the stock. There are always, of course, a number of people of good taste who select wisely, regardless of fashion's dictates; and to this "saving remnant" we owe a debt of gratitude for much that we have gained. Happily, the numbers are on the increase, and there are great possibilities from this haven, which we trust may finally permeate the whole lump.

It will thus be seen that the conditions for producing our best work have not been very favorable, but in spite of all we are making great progress. The manufacturers of the West are now giving great attention to the matter of good designs for their products, and some of them are now making a line of work that a few years ago could only be had from special designs, and a high cost. If such goods should be offered in En-



SIDE OF DINING-ROOM, SHOWING COLONIAL SIDEBOARD FOR MR. F. O. SKINNER, NEWTON, MASS. DESIGNED BY EDWARD DEWSON.

the styles of the middle ages, it will be well nigh impossible to decide correctly. Order is nature's first law and it is the basis of all good design—none but the "Know it Alls" can afford to ignore it. The most learned think they know but little, and when a designer is told by a novice to lop off 5 inches here and add 10 inches there; to wed a bacchanalian mask to the body of a Grecian deity; to jumble up the styles without rhyme or reason, and in defiance of all rules, it is enough to tempt one to take to the woods in disgust. This may seem a little overdrawn, but it is sketched from real life.

Under such conditions and limitations as I have noted, I think the designers are doing very well. It is not so much the absence of good original work, for there is plenty of that, as the lack of people who know merit when they see it, that's to be deplored. I have been for years in a position to quietly study

gland, as they doubtless will be before long, the Britishers will revise their opinion of our depraved tastes in design.

While we have to some extent modeled our furniture after foreign products, we have at the same time developed what may be termed original work. The "Colonial" style, which is based on the classic orders of antiquity, we have taken up and carried along to a high degree of perfection.

The "Romanesque," as at present exemplified, is also a style peculiarly our own—a semi-barbaric style—a mixture of rude strength with the delicate fancy of the Orient, it has been developed to that point where comparison with the "Romanesque" of the middle ages ceases.

PALACES on wheels are the new Wagner cars of the great through trains of the New York Central.